

A violin and a collection of silver whistles are arranged on a wooden surface. The violin is positioned diagonally in the upper right, with its body and f-hole visible. The whistles are arranged in a row, decreasing in length from left to right, and are positioned vertically. The background is a warm-toned wooden surface.

Up!

Accentuating the Positive

ISSUE 7 APRIL 2021

Making the world a
better place -
one page at a time

Photo Shearwater Whistles

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Up Front!

As Spring looks like it's finally arrived with the return of the swallows, and our first tentative steps back towards normality (remember that?!), we bid you a very warm welcome to the latest issue of Up! And what an issue it is! We've got an inspirational Up Sticks! from our man in the Congo, a world-renowned artist, a senior figure from the world of Chess and a guy who can play more musical instruments than you've ever seen or even heard of!

All this, plus our usual news from the worlds of Nature and Books, plus your top poems on the theme of Music in our newly-improved Poetry Corner pages.

So to purloin a phrase from another, rather well-known poet, if music be the food of love ... read on!

Bridget & Harry x

This issue is dedicated with love and thanks
to the late Bill Barnes, 1934 - 2021
Friend of Up! and lover of music

Jazzing Up!

JONNY HANNAH

Up!'s Harry Gallagher meets the man jazzing up the world of art

Jonny, we first met back in 2019 through a project you were doing with Northumberland Museums. Can you tell us about the project and how it went?

The project is called Northumberland Folk and is based around folklore from the county. I began visiting on a regular basis, reading books and websites, listening to tunes by great bands like the High Level Ranters, and began to build up a set of folk avenues and directions. But part of the challenge was to have community involvement. So I devised a wee booklet to entice stories from all and sundry.

For a long time now, folk has been deemed to be a thing that happened a long, long time ago, in a deep, dark wood. But I know that folk is ever-changing, and happening daily around us. It's one of the main storytelling vehicles for the working class. We don't often get books published, but our stories and weekly encounters are every bit as interesting as the volumes in any branch of Waterstones. The BBC programme *Who Do You Think You Are?* drives me mad. Who deemed the lives of famous people to be more interesting than the average man, woman or bairn on the street? Stop anyone, anywhere in the world, and their ancestry will be just as exciting to research and celebrate as the TV stars.

Anyway, that's when I encountered you. An email out of the blue saying, "Here's a poem". I love poetry! From Rimbaud's 'A Season in Hell' to Ferlinghetti. So this was a perfect connection, of your words rejoicing the extraordinary aspects of the everyday, which I was then keen to embellish



with some scribbles. So as the project draws to a close, you'll see stories from a woman in Ashington sit quite comfortably next to the Bamburgh worm. That's folk - the past and present colliding to

create a rich tapestry, a miscellany of this, that and the other.

You have such a distinctive style. How did you develop it?

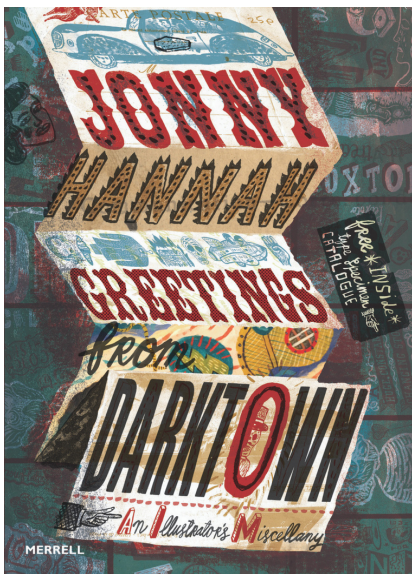
Simply through doing it lots of times. I always tell the students I teach at Solent University, that if you want to be good at pool, play pool a lot. If you want to have your own 'visual language' as we call it, draw till you think you're going insane, and it might just appear. I've been massively influenced by great graphic artists like Ben Shahn and David Stone Martin. But I also love folk art, or outsider art. There's a joyous anarchy there, a devil-may-care approach of people like Henry Darger and Madge Gill, that's magical.

I also had the great thrill of discovering the Pitmen Painters, as a result of the current project (it all connects up in the end). Pick up a mark-making tool, let it collide with a surface of some kind and see what happens. The blank paper must be conquered, and the more you do it, it never lessens the challenge, but it certainly increases your possibility of satisfyingly getting

Jazzing Up!

JONNY HANNAH

the stuff out of your head, into the big world for folks to see. And ... it's great fun. I get paid money to draw pictures ... braw! I come from a long line of men and women who hated their jobs. Then they got made redundant from them in the 80s. I was keen to circumvent that, so going to art school and drawing Hank Williams was a way of doing that. And I discovered a long time ago, how I loved drawing letters and typography. We grew up with great album covers. Like Barney Bubbles' covers for Elvis Costello, or the great packaging for any Crass record, so mixing text and image together has always made perfect sense to me. And if you're struggling to come up with ideas, a nice glass of wine and a film by Truffaut, or a song by Jacques Brel, CW Stoneking or King Creosote soon sorts that out...

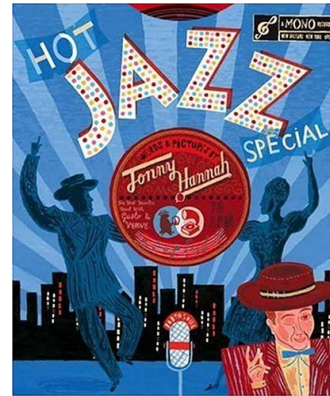


We know you live in Southampton, but understand you also spend time in a place called Darktown. What might we find if we came to visit you there? Darktown is my escapist hinterland of stuff, with a great selection of

shops and proprietors! Slim Gaillard runs McVouty's Second Hand Emporium. Jacques Tourneur looks after the slightly dilapidated cinema, where 'Out of the Past' is on a loop, alongside films by Jean Vigo. You'll easily find

Bascom Lazaar Lunsford busking on the main street. It's basically my cut & paste place of all the stuff I love in popular culture, even if it's not particularly popular. You can get to it by car down the Lost Highway or by ferry from Portsmouth over the 'Sea of Possibilities'. Once you get there, it's not that different to my local high street in the Southampton suburb of Shirley. But with better shops, and no one wears tracksuits and trainers.

The theme of this month's Up! is 'music'. We know you're a musical guy, what can you tell us about your Hot Jazz Special book?



HJS, as us angel-headed hipsters call it, was my one attempt at a children's picture book, but for a slightly older audience. It was a great project to work on. Explore and visually depict your heroes. So I

did. This was all David Lloyd's fault, the then head of Walker Books back in the early 2000s, who is also a massive jazz fan. So starting with Jelly Roll Morton and chronologically ending with Charlie Parker. If you've never heard Bird blow, God, you're missing out. Parker lived a short, tough, but packed life, smiling all the way, never playing the same notes in the same order twice. Louis Armstrong's in there too. The Hot 5 and Hot 7 recordings changed the world, made it a much brighter place. If West End Blues doesn't make you want to cry tears of joy, with its phenomenal fanfare ... call the undertaker (and you can take that to the bank, and cash it, brother).

The book is set in my imaginary Body & Soul Café, very much a precursor to my shops in

Jazzing Up!

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Darktown, and for one night only, they all come together and Jump for Joy. It's a book I'm still very proud of. What other kids' book has a prostitute and several drug users in it? Alas, it didn't sell, but I now have the satisfaction of some folks saying how it was ahead of its time.

So, what's on the horizon? Any new adventures planned you'd like to share with us?

I'm working on a new book with one of my real-life heroes, Richard Jobson. It's a book about The Skids, the punk band he was the singer and co-songwriter in. I'm drawing around Richard's words, and it'll be great fun to work on, once Northumberland Folk is finished. So I've been playing the Skids a lot. Always a joy. Is there a better second line to a song than 'betroted and divine'? And I'm also, as always, waiting for the phone to ring with new jobs. My agent in London and New York, 'Heart' are a great bunch, so hopefully there'll be new challenge on its way soon. The last book I worked on was for the British Library, all about Sea Shanties.

I've always wanted to be a sailor, preferably a French matelot, but instead I became an illustrator. There'll also be a few talks to compliment the Northumberland Folk project. And we're hoping to have a cabaret at Woodhorn museum one evening, perhaps for Halloween. By then we might just be able to have a dance again. I'm also enjoying my mid-life crisis by playing in a band, called The Postmen. We started out as a covers band, but now writing our own stuff. Last summer I wrote 'One-Way Town' all about the pandemic. God, our finger's on the pulse! And having just turned 50, my wife gave me an accordion, which I'm thrilled to bits about. So before we have the cabaret, I need to master *Mon Amant de Saint-Jean*...

You can discover more about Jonny's fascinating world here:

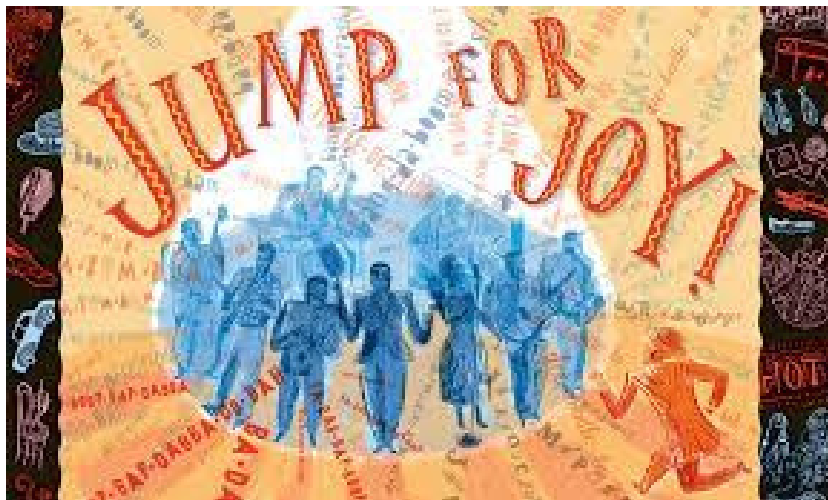
www.northumberlandfolk.info
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Write Up!

POEMS ON THE THEME OF MUSIC

Bass Fiddle

If I could lay down song
along your rhythm's edge
I'd skip an easy beat
and slip a sly word sweet
about a warm heart string
to swing it bee-buzz high
or moan it low and slow
below your big bad baritone.

Linda Goulden

Even deeper and crisper

Singing we high-wind hurtle city to city
across Scotland's belted waist to hear
The Icelandic Symphony Orchestra play
capitally. As musician after musician
crowds the stage we smile, so many tails.
Honey brass gleams, chestnut cellos wait
for sap-rise. Timpanists poise predatory.

Then it soars, I'm winter swept into fiords,
ice melts, sea eagles swoop, glaciers calve.
Side by side we voyage out of ourselves
into each other.

Finola Scott

Next month's theme is 'Books / Reading'

Send up to 3 poems (no more than 20 lines) to:
TalkToUp@gmail.com

Frederick Fleet

Lookout in Crow's Nest – SAVED

It was a night of threes and other odd numbers.
We were missing a set of glasses but the naked
eye's as good. One sea, like an oil slick pricked
with stars. No moon, no ripple. No swell.
Reggie's irregular breath in the cold.

Clouds formed odd shapes in front of our faces;
seeing things that weren't there. Threefold silence,
in bars, the rhythm of a waltz below:

One ... two, three...

One ... two, three...

One ... black ... mass

growing wide like a blind spot. Object directly ahead.
Three rings of the bell: 'Iceberg right ahead!'
Trapped in the carriage of a white knuckle ride,
we waited in watery-eyed silence:

'Turn... turn... turn'

cursing through our teeth,
my heart a tick-tocking
over-wound clock.

After triplets of seconds she swung to port
and we shaved a piece of ice as a souvenir.

'That were close.'

Natalie Scott

ChirrUp!

STEVE LOWE

Up!'s outdoor man on nature's orchestra

Spring is a wonderful season, as life begins to burst from the soil, daylight expands and embraces us all with hope and renewal. Is it any surprise then that it's also a season of song, especially amongst our feathered friends, shaking off the shackles of winter and shouting out from treetops that they are overjoyed?

The dawn chorus – ah! What a gift to hear nature's orchestra once again. In suburban gardens, hedges and woodlands, fields and streams the tune-up begins, perhaps a bit of flute here, tinkling of a triangle there, gradually building up to a full-blown performance without the aid of either conductor or score. Picking out the various performers may be hard but enjoying the atmosphere is reward enough for greeting the dawn.

Birdsong has always been a huge inspiration to composers and poets. Early spoken word stories handed down by storytelling Skalds or sung by Bards, wrap nature and wildlife into the story, and birdsong can often be symbolic within them.

Classical music is also blended full of nature's choir. In 1928, Respighi used a recording of a real-life nightingale within the 'Pines of Rome' and the songbird also appears in his neo-classical suite, 'The Birds', in which birdsong meets baroque!

This also features a dove *La Colomba*, with a heartfelt oboe melody, and the familiar call of the Cuckoo *Il Cucù*. The chirpy 'Hen' movement *La Gallina* sounds familiar, possibly because it may be based on the same Rameau harpsichord work ('The



Hen', or *La Poule*) that inspired Saint-Saëns for his 'Hens and Cockerels' movement in 'Carnival of the Animals'.

Most adventurously, Finnish Composer Rautavaara, used taped birdsong throughout his *Cantus Arcticus* - subtitled 'Concerto for Birds and Orchestra'. He did this by visiting the Arctic Circle and the marshlands of Liminka in Northern Finland to record the calls of a whole host of birds. Listening to it is like immersing yourself in an avian paradise! The melancholy song of the shore larks is unforgettable, as are the migrating whooper swans, all of which are carefully entwined with a vivid orchestral score.

One particular classical piece makes me long for open moorland and green pastures and it is a piece of music that fills me with joy. A quicksilver solo violin line flutters and swoops, surging ever higher above the orchestra's hush and single held chord as Vaughan Williams deftly depicts a lark as 'he rises and begins to round'. I do not believe there is a single better opening to create a tangible atmosphere!

Written in 1914, 'Lark Ascending' is described as "an evocation of the 'seraphically free' song of the skylark". It was inspired by a poem of the same name by George Meredith. As a piece of music, it is utterly pure and timeless.

ChirrUp!

STEVE LOWE

The skylark is the subject of much poetry, of which 'To a Skylark' by William Wordsworth is perhaps the most apt:

*Up with me! up with me into the clouds!
For thy song, Lark, is strong;
Up with me, up with me into the clouds!
Singing, singing,
With clouds and sky about thee ringing,
Lift me, guide me till I find
That spot which seems so to thy mind!*

We are lucky in the north east of England, where the skylark remains our most common lark. In other parts of the UK, it is a bird threatened by a shrinking of suitable habitat. But any countryside walk in spring still brings with it the opportunity to watch this tiny and nondescript 'little brown job' take flight and soar to the heaven, where it hovers for a short time, shouting for joy in such a melodic fashion, before parachuting back to earth. It is the males who do this, singing all the time they are in the air.

The song is sweet enough on the ear, with its high pitch, exuberant tone and effortless delivery. It is varied, too, incorporating motifs from other birds as well as the skylark's own repertoire. But its special property is its sustained nature; when a lark is singing there is no break, no real phrasing, just a stream of unbroken sound like the flow of a small brook. To human ears, it's perfect and calming but the male is actually staking his claim on his territory and the 'words' are 'macho', with the best vocalist combining skill, audacity and repertoire in his effort to woo the 'ladies'.



The males, who are the main performers, are under pressure to keep singing to maintain their territorial boundaries, working hard like city workers afraid of the sack! There is little vocal respite, with individual birds launching themselves into the air without interval as territories are usually contiguous.

Birds holding territory all year will even sing in January on mild days. When a predator attacks, the best males carry on singing regardless of the risk – they actually suffer fewer casualties as a result of their cheek! The average song-flight song lasts for just 2½ minutes (although a more passionate performance can go up to 5). You can probably tell by now that this is a favourite bird of mine!

Why not listen for birdsong in other pieces of music? In addition to those already mentioned, you could have a listen to Delius's 'On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring', Beethoven's 'Pastoral Symphony' or Messiaen's 'Oiseaux Exotiques'. If your tastes are a bit more modern then perhaps David Gray's 'Birds of the High Arctic', 'Blackbird' by the Beatles, the groovy 'Three Little Birds' by Bob Marley or a particular favourite of mine - Ryan Bingham's 'How Shall A Sparrow Fly'.

ChirrUp!

STEVE LOWE

Better still, take your ears with you when you go out – close your eyes and listen. Once you tune out the interference of modern life, the music of nature will fill your ears with sound.

This year, May 2nd is International Dawn Chorus Day, and there will be events across the globe to try and encourage us to enjoy the largest free music festival of all.

And all you have to do to join in is open your window!



An experienced wildlife professional, Steve currently works freelance with Northumberland Rivers Trust as well as undertaking work with volunteers on local heritage and archaeology projects. His hope is to leave the world a better place.

Cartoon Corner



This month's 'toon from the super talented John Pickin is a chilled three-toed sloth listening to her Walkman.

Did you know?

Sloths are three times stronger than us. They are the undisputed pull-up world champions. From the moment they are born, sloths are able to lift their entire body weight upwards with just one arm.

John says: "I am and always have been a compulsive doodler. During April '20 I set myself the challenge of drawing an ape-a-day. And in January this year – renamed Buguary – the task was an insect cartoon each day. I just love knocking out those 'toons .."

You can contact John at pickinjohn@gmail.com

Tune Up!

JOHN BUSHBY

Up! talks to a musical instrument maker and musician extraordinaire!

Your business is called Shearwater Whistles. Where did the name come from?

It comes from a bird, the migratory Short Tailed Shearwater, that migrates annually from the Northern Hemisphere to nest on the islands in Bass Strait between the Australian mainland and the island of Tasmania where I am from. The birds are more commonly known as Mutton Birds there, and are caught and eaten by the inhabitants, many of whom are descended from Aboriginal forebears. My wife Caroline, myself and son Malcolm migrated back the other way from Tasmania to the UK in 2005, so it seemed an appropriate name.

When did your relationship with music start?

At the tender age of 6. My Scottish grandmother used to play the piano whilst I sang. The first song I remember singing was Robert Burns' *Ye Banks And Braes*. As children we grew up very aware of our Scottish heritage and that's stayed with me all my life. I used to spend hours poring over



songbooks we had in the house to find songs from Scotland. I also remember looking through my mother's Burns collection of poetry and song.

There has always been an artistic leaning in my family. My mother loved learning new things and was also artistic, along with my aunt and my older sister, both painters. In the 1840s my great, great grandfather had the first picture framing and gilding business in Tasmania, and his son had the first music shop and music printing business there too. I remember seeing a concertina that was in the family, obviously from his shop, and I still have an old banjo back in Hobart.

Our youngest son Malcolm, now fiddle player with Scottish band The Tannahill Weavers, really had no chance!

I also started piano lessons but eventually gave up - as my teacher said, "His fingers are like bundles of sticks, he'd be better playing the flute!" So ended the piano lessons! I didn't really enjoy playing piano, though it has helped with my understanding of music.

My parents were classical music lovers and my father had a large record collection. I remember him taking me to a record store to let me choose a record. I've no idea why, but I chose a record

Tune Up!

JOHN BUSHBY

featuring the Dolmetsch Recorder Consort, fell in love with the recorder and Early Music, and taught myself recorder. I had really broad tastes as I also loved Australian Bush songs when I was a bit older. I remember being asked at school in year 10, what I wanted to do when I left school and my immediate answer was 'Music!'

In year 11 I changed schools, joined the choir, and that's how I met my wife-to-be, Caroline. It was rather sneaky as I wanted to get to know her, so volunteered to play recorder obligato for her solo in Vivaldi's *Gloria*. The rest, as they say, is history! From there we both studied singing at the Tasmanian Conservatorium of Music, having both won scholarships but we found our hearts were not really into the rigid music course of that time, as we both had far broader musical tastes than formal study could provide.

We did more and more traditional music and became heavily involved, running folk festivals and folk clubs. I eventually became a Tasmanian tour agent for many UK folk performers.

Up! has had the privilege of playing in various sessions with you over the years. Does the fact that you play a variety of instruments help when it comes to making them?

I've always been interested in how things work, so started wanting to do more than singing and playing guitar. I became interested in whistles after we formed a group with a Dublin born whistle player and a Tasmanian banjo player. Playing whistle didn't really enter my head until I broke a collar bone in a car accident and it was the only instrument I could play!

From there I got interested in pipes and a friend kindly brought a set of Northumbrian smallpipes back from England. After an initial issue with a leaky bag was fixed, I realised the chanter was in 'F not quite sharp' (*never try to play along with a Northumbrian piper! - Ed*) which was useless in sessions, so I ended up buying a 'G' chanter from Colin Ross of the High Level Ranters. From there I moved onto Scottish smallpipes and Scottish Lowland Pipes made by a friend in Hobart. Then that became Galician gaitas and a bit of Uilleann Pipe playing.

I was also interested in the sound of the 'Irish' bouzouki and eventually worked out how to make one, so that set me on the path of making other instruments including harps. I love learning new instruments - and if I can, I will! Sadly now I just don't have time to make stringed instruments.



On moving to Wylam in the UK, I built a small shed and was thinking what can I make in this shed? I had a light bulb moment and thought, why not make whistles at a decent price that people can afford? Now I have a business selling worldwide to some very happy customers with at least a 2-month waiting list, due to the numbers we're selling.

I play concert flute and also a bit of saxophone and clarinet; both enough so I can also repair and service woodwinds. If it's not nailed down, I'll have a go!

So yes, knowing how to play a wide range of instruments has helped me in my making. I understand what works and sounds good. I think I've cracked it, but one can always learn more.

Tune Up!

JOHN BUSHBY

What's your favourite instrument to play, and why?

That's a difficult question. It depends on my mood, where I am and who I'm playing with. My main instrument used to be my voice but I find just singing is limiting when I have so many other instruments and sounds I want to use. I'd say the most fun I have is playing various bagpipes as there's a wide repertoire from Scottish, Northumbrian, Irish, and French music. Also one can use them for Early Music too, and even some Baroque music which I'm dabbling with at the moment. I am aware being a 'jack of all trades' can be frustrating, but it also has its rewards and it stops me getting bored. I've been told I have a low boredom threshold and I think that's probably right!



We're big on music for wellbeing – there's just something about playing and singing together that makes you feel great. As someone who actually makes their living by music, does this still ring true for you?

I don't know where I would be without my creative activity. Making and sharing music is good for the soul. I sometimes think maybe I have

spread myself too thinly playing and liking so many styles of music but that has always been my way and it's not going to change now!

www.shearwaterwhistles.com



If you have to ask what jazz is, you'll never know.

Louis Armstrong

I haven't understood a bar of music in my life, but I have felt it.

Igor Stravinsky

Everything in the universe has a rhythm, everything dances.

Maya Angelou

Write Up!

POEMS ON THE THEME OF MUSIC

Back Room Blues

My home is crowded with amps.
Solid, square, they loom over wardrobe tops
shrouded in black like Goths.
One exile squats on a garden chair
in our summer house ---- privileged, regal,
hidden from sunlight.
Another in the back room is flavour of the month.

Its compatriots, hi-fi speakers and gadgets with pedals,
impede my way across the carpet
as I narrowly miss a music stand.
Guitars in cases are stacked to the ceiling in cupboards,
recline like geisha girls on the bed.
Cables are boundaries
a vacuum cleaner dares not cross.

Unseen power throbs through this room,
music has taken over.

Gene Groves

Sleeve notes

In another land, beyond the memory-stealing mountains,
a version of me holds an album cover to the desk light,
illuminating every word, in the smallest print,
to know who played marimba on the interlude
between tracks three and four,
side 2.

Matt Nicholson

The Hole

The toilet-seat adorned
doorway to the shed
on The Hill
The nest of a 'long before
the phrase was born'
Boyband

An unlikely frontman
Tuneless in his 'Aim
to Regain his Mind'
The flat flap of drumsticks
On upturned kitchen bowls

The freckled nose of
the beautiful guitar boy
snubbed through a curtain
of curls as he squeeze
catscreech from the strings

I only kissed him so
he would stop

Julie Meredith

Guitar

I play you. Gently pluck strings.
Your heartbeat sounds, now;
A strong and steady rhythm
Resonates, and fills up the
Empty spaces of the room.
Together, we harmonise;
Sing of people and places
We will never go, never see.
Travel far across continents
And stay exactly where we are.
Each in step with the other:
This is us. This is our secret.

Jenny Thompson

Up Sticks!

FRANCIS HANNAWAY

Up! meets a man who upped sticks from Middlesbrough to Africa to feed the hungry

Francis, how does a boy from the Boro end up living and working in the Congo?

My dad worked his way across Canada before getting married. He took us as £10 Poms to emigrate to Australia when I was just 7. We went by ship and stayed almost 3 years. My primary education was full of tales of exploration and adventure; I loved the story of Dr. David Livingstone searching for the source of the Nile. I decided at the age of 9 that I would follow in his footsteps! Our return journey from Australia took us to some wonderful places. We called in at New Zealand (where my cousins lived), Tahiti, we passed through the Panama Canal and visited the famous floating market on the island of Curaçao, near Venezuela. Travelling to faraway lands was always going to be on the cards.

As an adult I became a teacher in Special Education, and in my spare time I was involved in the Middlesbrough Catholic Handicapped Fellowship, running lots of respite activities and supporting families. I started to pay a mortgage for a house and all the normal things. But I was always searching for a bit more adventure. I applied to the government sponsored Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), but for some reason they rejected me. I then applied to Mill Hill Missionaries, a Catholic organisation that works in a lot of developing countries. After a false start I was directed away from their first choice, Pakistan, and sent instead to the Democratic Republic of Congo, at that time known as Zaire.



The country was under the dictator Mobutu and in an extreme state of decline. But the countryside was stunning, with swaying palm trees and lush, dense, humid tropical forest. Needless to say fresh bananas, avocados, pineapples grew everywhere. I stayed there for three years, teaching the young men who were aspiring to join Mill Hill Missionaries, in the Diocese of Basankusu. After my time teaching English, and general humanities, I returned to Teesside and to the humdrum existence I'd left behind.

I visited the Congo quite a few times over the years. Eventually, with only one English missionary remaining, I was asked to do another stint of 3 years – I agreed. I taught again for 3 years, but decided to do something else outside of my official job, as well. I set up a centre for malnourished children. Unhappy with a small feeding centre that was already floundering, I rented a small house with one of the volunteers, Judith Bondjembo. All 12 volunteers from the first project followed us.

Mill Hill Missionaries moved their operation to Kinshasa during my 4th year and so I stayed in Basankusu, becoming independent of them. As time went on, word spread; we received children from outlying villages who were suffering from

Up Sticks!

FRANCIS HANNAWAY

malnutrition. I paid for it all by sharing my story each week on Facebook and YouTube. People here are incredibly poor and the health services are poorly equipped – so we became the social services of Basankusu. We've seen some harrowing scenes, but after 6 years we're still going strong, and still depending on donations to do it. In that time we've treated over 4,000 children and made and distributed 32 wheelchair tricycles!

How does your life now compare with how you thought it would turn out when you were young?

When I was young, I couldn't imagine that I would do anything exciting, even driving a car seemed just a dream as a child. In the rainforest, I had to get used to driving a 4x4 jeep and a dirt track cross-country motorbike to work in nearby villages. On returning from one journey, of 120 miles through the rainforest over rough dirt roads, my motorbike broke down several times. I walked to the next village and was followed by a monkey in the trees next to the road. Some teenage boys came along to keep me company along the way. They told me that the monkey knew I didn't have a rifle to shoot him and that's



why it wasn't frightened! The motorbike ended up breaking down again later and couldn't be repaired there, so I ended up completing the journey on a loaned bicycle (with very poor brakes!) along the jungle track. I couldn't have imagined such a life when I was younger!

We didn't have much money as a child and this was compounded by being part of a large family, so living in basic conditions wasn't so difficult. I only eat fish, but it's quite different having the fish delivered when it's still alive. For meat eaters, that goes for pork, mutton, goat and chicken as well!



I never imagined having to watch out for venomous snakes, spiders and scorpions – thankfully we don't see them too often. I didn't think I would ever suffer from

malaria in my lifetime – and it's a very serious illness which I've had several times – or see people with polio, or leprosy. Fortunately, progress in the development of antibiotics, and other medicines, has made a big difference in the treatment of such things.

We've had a couple of conversations about our first world problems here in the UK, compared to what you see and deal with. What's the hardest thing about your work and life now?

Congo is among the most corrupt countries in the world. This affects me directly with all the fictitious payments I'm supposed to make and the forms I have to fill in and pay for. All taxation goes directly into the pockets of the elite. So, the second effect of corruption is that it impoverishes the country. The mineral wealth alone could give

Up Sticks!

FRANCIS HANNAWAY



everyone free healthcare, education and build a road system to aid businesses. Instead, we see a post apocalyptic scenario with formerly well-maintained earth roads that have descended into

winding country footpaths.

In Basankusu, the remains of colonial-era cast iron water pipes are revealed as the once brick-paved roads become almost impassable through erosion. The net result of corruption is that 90% of the population live on less than £1 a day. Poverty, caused by corruption, carries people to an early grave.

What's your very favourite thing about living where you do?

It's usually sunny, but when it's not the spectacular thunderstorms bring warm rain. I sometimes think about Middlesbrough's cold, windy weather, even in April or May - although I sometimes miss that freshness.

The other thing about my work here is that - although I'm on-call all the time - I'm my own boss. I live a fairly frugal life and worry constantly about running out of funds, but changes that have taken place over the past 6 years have made life a lot easier. Our internet

connection, by mobile phone, is usually passable. Six years ago it didn't exist. Solar panels mean that we now have electric light and satellite TV (although the cheapest, most basic package) and can run a small fridge.

The people are open and friendly; they don't care who you are - they just speak their minds. British people are more distant and reluctant to engage with people they don't know.



So is that it for you? Settled in the Congo, or do you see yourself moving on at some point?

I'm not as young as I was and I always envisage returning to my house in Normanby one day, However, every year I say to Judith 'let's just get through this season and perhaps call it a day', (malnutrition increases from April and goes down in September here) but every year, so far, we've decided to do another year.

If you'd like to help to support Francis's fantastic work, feel free to add him on Facebook.

Donations to [PayPal.me/FHannaway.com](https://www.paypal.me/FHannaway.com)

Write Up!

POEMS ON THE THEME OF MUSIC

The Right Song

In the morning
with coffee and stiff shoulders
and a blackbird on the lawn

In the sun
with cooling tea
with your breath coming gently

In the kitchen
for the ceremony
of a particular kind of love

In crisis
untying your ribbon tears
the ones you need to cry

Always
the electric moment
the drop of a needle
your thumb on a screen

Such an easy,
such a profound thing

Breaking a stone open
to reveal the crystal veins

The right song
at just the right time

Megan Pattie

Alnwick Pipers' Society

Twenty or more of us, not just Northumbrian
pipers – fiddlers, moothies, whistle and fluters,
guitar, concertina – truth is
only the music matters, building a voice in the chorus.

Gold-brown obelisk foam on the bar,
curls of long dead woodfire light the carpet
flickering dust notes.

Finger stops and starts find tunes
we never knew we knew.

Old pipers trudge twelve miles through snow to spell
an arcane vision passed on with land
in fluttering shades, the mad hares dance.

Learn from those who paid the piper's bill
we play the bloody thing because we can
just ask, like Jimmy Little, How does it gan?

Dave Medd

The Audition

I should never have applied - two buses after school,
my final exams are next month. The hall's a church
with traces of linseed oil, pollen and incense.
A silent hymn sheet sits on each pew.

The manager/conductor, a former diva in a full length
gentian dress - points to the top line and asks me to sing.
'There's no need to bellow your voice is clear and true,
take a deep breath, whisper the line.' And I did.

On the way home I buy chips savouring the sharp salt
on my lips, the dry scratchy paper on my moist palms.
Walking in evening traffic, I hear below the hum of horns,
the sigh of honeysuckle as rain falls.

Rona Fitzgerald

Check Up!

LARA BARNES

Up! meets a queen of the UK chess scene



Up! knows you've been around the chess scene for many years now, both as a player and an arbiter (referee). What is it that people find so fascinating about the game?

I learned from my mam at around 6 years old and played in the school chess club in middle school. I always loved 'mind games': chess, cards, board games. I accompanied my grandma to whist drives when I was about 10!

All ages and abilities can compete against each other. With assistants or technology to support them, people who are physically disabled can participate against the able-bodied, not many sports can claim that! Tournaments are arranged by skill level (or age), so you compete against people of similar ability.

The number of potential moves from the starting position is greater than the number of atoms in universe! So the strategies and tactics involved appeal to the human desire for solving problems and finding the best solution. It's ideal for 'silver surfers' to keep the brain active and there is a big

social side to chess, with clubs having members from all age groups.

For many people it is the social side of the game that attracts them. Going to a regular club, playing fast 'Blitz' chess (less than 10 minutes per game) in a pub or café and going to tournaments in different parts of the country. At the top level, and one of my great pleasures and privileges, has been the international travel. I have been involved in tournaments in Mongolia, Russia, China, Norway and South Africa to name a few.



I am amazingly lucky to count the folks in the picture above as my good friends. They hail from: Mongolia, Sri Lanka, China, Kazakhstan, Italy, Denmark, Israel, Malaysia and Australia (oh, and me from Northumberland)!

The motto of the World Chess Federation (FIDE) is *Gens una sumus*, Latin for "We are one people".

Chess has a reputation for being a difficult game with lots of complicated rules, and folk may be put off as a result. How would you tempt someone who's never played to give it a go?

There are more arguments over rules at a family game of monopoly than in the average chess tournament! For inexperienced players there are only two complicated moves 'castling' and 'en-passant'. Castling is usually OK once explained but en-passant can be 'fun'. Apparently, there

Check Up!

LARA BARNES

are more books on chess than on any other single subject, so learning the strategies is always easy to read up on!

Even though I wish it was different, and there is no biological reason for it, there is still gender inequality in chess participation. I am hoping *The Queen's Gambit* will help put that right! Similar numbers of boys and girls start playing in primary school. In the past, boys tended to love the 'battle', but many girls give up in their teens if they only saw the competitiveness. I tempt girls by explaining and being passionate about the artistic and aesthetic side of the game. There is beauty in the patterns and combinations of moves. My daughter loved to go to tournaments with me when she was little but was more interested in seeing the friends she had made than the actual chess! So, I would always recommend it for people who want to meet others, want something that they can keep learning more about 'forever' and love the adrenaline thrill of winning.

The recent *Queen's Gambit* television series (based on the book of the same name by Walter Tevis) has been incredibly popular. Can you tell us what a 'Queen's Gambit' is, and how accurate a portrayal of the chess scene the series provided?

The Queen's Gambit is a chess opening in which a small material loss is offered in exchange for a strong attacking position. There are many chess openings which the experienced player will memorise and study and this is a centuries-old opening where the 'd' or 'queen's' pawn is played first. The first moves are: 1.d4 d5 2.c4



(see position). The 'Gambit' is about giving black a 'free' pawn on c4. However, if black takes the pawn, white can play 3.e4, gaining two strong central pawns...do you wish you hadn't asked yet?

The series gave a flavour of tournament life but the clapping when other games were going on would be frowned on! Chess tournaments are usually silent while games are being played. It's one of my main jobs as an arbiter to keep the playing area as quiet and free from distraction as possible. Few tournaments are only one game a day either, only the very top world events are like that.

The characters were quite well portrayed, as at the top level you do get some quite eccentric people. Many higher-level competitive players are on the autistic spectrum and chess gives an amazing opportunity for people with ASD to participate in a social activity that is a little more routine, is familiar and structured and has a learnable etiquette.

I didn't analyse the chess games, but, as you can imagine, many chess player friends of mine did!

Check Up!

LARA BARNES



Apparently, the games were all 'real games' from historical tournaments (or very close). There was a lot of speculation on social media as to who the characters represented, as happened after the book was first published. There are similarities with world champions and challengers of the 60s and 70s in the big chess 'cold war' between the USA and the Soviet Union.

Regardless of how true to life the series was, it's undoubtedly raised the profile of chess. That's got to be a good thing hasn't it?

Absolutely! The frustrating thing is that the momentum may have been partially lost due to Covid restrictions. The take-up of online chess has been huge however, even the British Championships were online last year. Our local clubs are planning for the return of 'OTB' (over the board) chess in the coming weeks and months and there is a new form called 'hybrid chess' where opponents play over the internet but from a room with an arbiter present (online chess also brought some accusations of cheating, using a computer!).

One of my lasting memories of why chess should have a higher profile was about 15 years ago. I was a music (and chess) teacher in a special school for kids with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. We entered a UK-wide tournament and 2 of the boys, both with ADHD, ended up playing in the regional final, where they outperformed (and behaved better than) some pupils from the local private grammar school!

Chess can be a great social leveller!



Chess is a sea in which a gnat may drink and an elephant may bathe.

Anon

Not all artists are chess players, but all chess players are artists.

Marcel Duchamp

No-one has ever won a game of chess by taking only forward moves, sometimes you have to move backwards to take better steps forwards.

That's life.

Anon

Read Up!

VIC WATSON

Up!'s resident book expert on embracing the new

It's officially spring: the season of new beginnings. Are you looking to try something new? Maybe you'd like to give a new hobby a go, learn to bake or change your diet? Read on ...

To quieten a busy mind

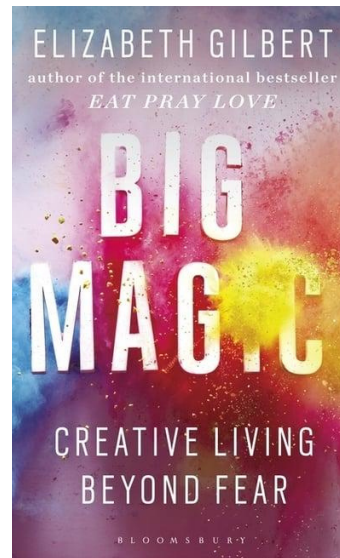
***Mindfulness for Creativity* by Dr Danny Penman**

This four-week programme requires just 10-20 minutes each day to help you enhance your creativity, boost problem-solving and decision-making abilities. Mindfulness has been clinically proven to reduce stress, anxiety and depression. Following on from *Finding Peace in a Frantic World*, Penman has created a guide that uses mindfulness techniques to encourage creativity in whatever form that may take. *Mindfulness for Creativity* soothes and clears your mind, allowing you to channel your inner confidence and intuition as well as helping you build your resilience in order to cope with setbacks. Increasing intuition and confidence, it also comes with an accompanying CD featuring six guided meditations.

To give you permission to be creative

***Big Magic* by Elizabeth Gilbert**

Whether you want to write, create art, face challenges at work or embark on a long-held dream, this book - from the author of *Eat, Pray, Love* - encourages readers to embrace curiosity, stare fear in the face and go for whatever it is that



will make your life more vivid and rewarding. Gilbert draws on her own life experiences as well as anecdotes from friends and stories from people she is inspired by. *Big Magic* is unpretentious, funny and warm as well. It genuinely feels like reading a letter from a

friend who wants you to live your best life while being kind to yourself.

To get out of a rut

***Year of Yes* by Shonda Rhimes**

One of Hollywood's most powerful women - creator of *Grey's Anatomy* and *Scandal* - reveals all of her excuses for saying 'no' - and how she began to embrace the power of saying 'yes'. When introverted Rhimes started accepting all the opportunities and invitations she was given, she discovered joy in her work, her family and her life in general. *Year of Yes* is profound, inspiring, funny and moving but it also allows readers a peek behind the curtain of some of the biggest shows and events. *Year of Yes* is perfect for anyone who feels stuck in a rut.

To sketch stress-free

***Drawing for the Artistically Undiscovered* by Quentin Blake & John Cassidy**

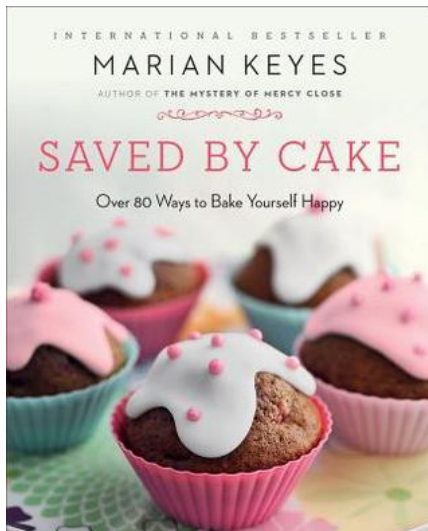
This is a marvellous pressure-free sketchbook which features scribble-starters, Quentin Blake illustrations and encouragement.

Read Up!

VIC WATSON

Although this is marketed as a book for kids, I was bought this when I was in my late 20s and can attest to its confidence-building capabilities. The book encourages users to see things differently. You can dip in and out of this sketchbook while finding your own style.

To know you're not alone - and to bake some cake



Saved By Cake by Marian Keyes

Marian Keyes is best-known for her excellent 'chick lit' novels and possibly her excellent Twitter craic but *Saved By Cake* is a revelation. Not only is it a brilliant book for beginner or nervous bakers, it's also an honest account of Marian's depression and how baking helped her overcome an incredibly difficult time in her life. This bittersweet memoir wrapped up in a recipe book is delivered in typical Keyes style - conversational, witty, accessible and fun. The variety of recipes ranges from basic to fancy with something for everyone to try.

To write right

On Writing by Stephen King

Part-memoir, part-masterclass, *On Writing* is illuminating and full of practical advice for every wannabe writer. King reveals lots of his personal journey while sharing encouragement and words of wisdom in a friendly, conversational style.

To overcome writer's block

Bird By Bird by Anne Lamott

If you're finding the challenge of writing a novel insurmountable, *Bird By Bird* could bring you some comfort as well as help reignite your passion for writing. Anne Lamott has a brilliant turn of phrase and her humorous, inspiring advice will give you an injection of enthusiasm for the craft.



Victoria Watson is a writer, reader and host of Noir at the Bar in Newcastle, connecting readers and writers from all over the world. She runs creative writing groups through her business, Elementary V Watson.

She is also a copy editor and proofreader.

www.elementaryvwatson.com

Round Up!

AND COMING UP ...

So there we are – told you it was a good ‘un, didn’t we!
Our thanks go, as usual, to all our wonderful contributors,
our star interviewees and most of all to you, our readers.
Without you there is no Up!

As always, we value your contributions, comments and suggestions.
Please feel free to get in touch at TalkToUp@gmail.com.
We look forward to hearing from you!

One final word before we start work on next month’s ‘Books & Reading’
themed issue: please do remember this virus isn’t quite done yet.
Here at Up! HQ we have one gratefully-received aching arm apiece.
We’re eagerly awaiting that vital second round, and we’re sure a lot of you
are in the same boat. Please stay safe out there and we’ll all come out the
other side together.

Much love
Bridget & Harry xx

Keeping Up!

As mentioned in last month's edition, here at Up! we're
looking to the future.

With this in mind, we've set up a PayPal 'Tip Jar' should
anyone wish to make a small contribution to the running
of the magazine.

Our vision of Up! as a free magazine, available for one and
all to download and enjoy, remains the same. We'll
continue to promote all the good stuff happening wherever
we find it, for you our wonderful Up! community.



Voluntary donations to
Up! Community Group
can be made here:

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